

VIRGIN SPINEDACE
(*Lepidomeda mollinspinis mollinspinis*)

STATUS: Species protected under a Conservation Agreement.

SPECIES DESCRIPTION: Virgin spinedace are small [5 to 13 cm (2 to 5 inches)] fish with a broad and flattened silvery body often having a brassy sheen. Spinedace received their common name from the fusion of the first and second hard spines of the dorsal fin.

HABITAT: Spinedace are found in small streams. They prefer cool, clean tributaries and inflow areas at larger streams and are not generally found in the mainstem of larger streams. Generally found in streams below 1,372 m (4,500 ft) elevation.

RANGE: Current: Found in several tributaries of the Virgin River in Mohave County, Arizona and Utah. These include Beaver Dam Wash, Santa Clara River, Ash Creek, La Verkin Creek, North Creek, Shunes Creek, and the North and East Forks of the Virgin River. Although populations have declined, spinedace are still found within most of their historic range.

Potential: Additional habitat within the Virgin River basin could be re-occupied if habitat conditions are improved.

REASONS FOR DECLINE / VULNERABILITY: Threats to this species include habitat loss and fragmentation and competition with introduced fish species.

LAND MANAGEMENT / OWNERSHIP: In Arizona: mostly state and private, with a little BLM.

NOTES: A Conservation Agreement between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, Washington County Water Conservancy District and others was finalized in 1995. The plan focuses on reducing threats to the Virgin Spinedace and enhancing and/or stabilizing instream flow in specific reaches of occupied and unoccupied habitat. The Conservation Agreement is available on the internet at <http://arizonaes.fws.gov/virgin1.htm>